



January 20, 2016
Acts 8:1-40
Pastor Gary Hamrick

Exegetical Study

1. Saul/Paul
 - a. In [Acts 7:58](#), we read that Saul was complicit in the murder of Stephen.
 - b. In [Acts 13:9](#), we read that he was now also known as Paul, a name change that would help him reach the Gentiles.
 - i. He was Jewish and also a Roman citizen.
 - ii. Pastor Gary said, “In order not to alienate them with a Hebrew name, Saul, he [adopted] a Roman name...”
 - c. Saul was believed to be a member of the Sanhedrin because he was there giving consent to Stephen’s murder.
 - i. [Acts 7:60](#) - *“And Saul was there, giving approval to his death.”*
 1. To give approval meant that he gave his vote for execution.
 - ii. All members of the Sanhedrin had to be married.
 1. Pastor Gary said, “[He wrote] in his epistles [indicating that] he was a single man. Some believe that [Paul’s wife divorced him] when he converted to Christ. We don’t know that for sure, but historically [that’s what many Bible scholars believe to be the case].
2. [Acts 8:1-3](#) - *“On that day a great persecution broke out against the church at Jerusalem, and all except the apostles were scattered throughout Judea and Samaria. Godly men buried Stephen and mourned deeply for him. But Saul began to destroy the church. Going from house to house, he dragged off men and women and put them in prison.”*
 - a. At this point in Church history, it had only been about six years since Jesus’ death, burial, resurrection, and ascension.
 - i. It’s estimated that by this time the Church had grown to about ten

thousand people.

- b. Jesus' original mandate was for Christians to be his witnesses in the world.
 - i. **Acts 1:8** - "... you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."
 - ii. For the first six years the Church had primarily been centered in Jerusalem.
 - iii. It's as though Christians forgot about Judea, Samaria, and the ends of the earth!
 - iv. Pastor Gary said, "It took persecution to get them moving in the will of God. ... Sometimes it takes a crisis to get us out of our comfort zone and to get us in step with God's will. It was God's will that the gospel should spread beyond the walls of Jerusalem, but they weren't doing [what Jesus told them to do]. ... These good, God-loving people were playing it safe, and they had it parked right there in Jerusalem, [so] God had to use a little persecution to stir them up and to move them out."
 - v. **Acts 11:19-21** - "Now those who had been scattered by the persecution in connection with Stephen traveled as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus and Antioch, telling the message only to Jews. Some of them, however, men from Cyprus and Cyrene, went to Antioch and began to speak to Greeks also, telling them the good news about the Lord Jesus. The Lord's hand was with them, and a great number of people believed and turned to the Lord."
- c. Saul had good intentions and was exceedingly zealous about his faith in God, but he was mistaken about Christianity being a heretical sect of Judaism, centered on Jesus, whom he did not believe to be the Messiah.

3. **Acts 8:4-8** - "Those who had been scattered preached the word wherever they went. Philip went down to a city in Samaria and proclaimed the Christ there. When the crowds heard Philip and saw the miraculous signs he did, they all paid close attention to what he said. **With shrieks, evil spirits came out of many, and many paralytics and cripples were healed.** So there was great joy in that city." (Emphasis added)

- a. Philip was one of the original seven deacons.
 - i. **Acts 6:5b** - "They chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit; also Philip..."
 - ii. **Acts 21:8-9** - "Leaving the next day, we reached Caesarea and stayed at the house of Philip the evangelist, one of the Seven. He had four unmarried daughters who prophesied."

- b. Samaria was what we might think of as a county; and today it's known as the West Bank.



4. **Acts 8:9-25** – *“Now for some time a man named Simon had practiced sorcery in the city and amazed all the people of Samaria. He boasted that he was someone great, and all the people, both high and low, gave him their attention and exclaimed, ‘This man is the divine power known as the Great Power.’ They followed him because he had amazed them for a long time with his magic. But when they believed Philip as he preached the good news of the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women. Simon himself believed and was baptized. And he followed Philip everywhere, astonished by the great signs and miracles he saw. When the apostles in Jerusalem heard that Samaria had accepted the word of God, they sent Peter and John to them. When they arrived, they prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit, because the Holy Spirit had not yet come upon any of them; they had simply been baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus. Then Peter and John placed their hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit. When Simon saw that the Spirit was given at the laying on of the apostles’ hands, he offered them money and said, ‘Give me also this ability so that everyone on whom I lay my hands may receive the Holy Spirit.’ Peter answered: ‘May your money perish with you, because you thought you could buy the gift of God with money! You have no part or share in this ministry, because your heart is not right before God. Repent of this wickedness and pray to the Lord. Perhaps he will forgive you for having such a thought in your heart. For I see that you are full of bitterness and captive to sin.’ Then Simon answered, ‘Pray to the Lord for me so that nothing you have said may happen to me.” When they had testified and proclaimed the word of the Lord, Peter and John returned to Jerusalem, preaching the gospel in many Samaritan villages.”*

a. Simon

- i. The Greek word for sorcery is mageuo, from which we get the English word magic.¹

¹ <https://www.blueletterbible.org/lang/lexicon/lexicon.cfm?Strongsg=G3096&t=NIV>

- ii. Simon was more than just a magician as we would understand the term; he was involved in the realm of demons.
 - iii. [Acts 8:13a](#) - *“Simon himself believed and was baptized.”*
- b. Samaritans
 - i. The gospel was preached in Samaria, which is very interesting, considering the fact that there was long-standing animosity between Jews and Samaritans.
 - ii. When church leaders in Jerusalem received the news that Samaritans had come to faith in Jesus, they were shocked, so they sent Peter and John to investigate.
 - iii. The Samaritans were saved!
 - 1. [Acts 8:12](#) - *“But when they believed Philip as he preached the good news of the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women.”*
- c. The Holy Spirit
 - i. [Acts 8:17](#) - *“Then Peter and John placed their hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit.”*
 - ii. Pastor Gary said, “When you get saved, when you trust Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior, and you receive God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit... There is evidence in Scripture that there is a difference between the indwelling of the Spirit when you get saved and the baptizing work of the Holy Spirit; in other words, the fullness and overflowing work of the Holy Spirit.”
 - iii. Peter and John laid hands on the believing Samaritans that they might receive the fullness and overflowing work of the Holy Spirit.
 - 1. [Acts 8:16](#) - *“... the Holy Spirit had not yet come **upon** any of them...”* (Emphasis added)
 - iv. Pastor Gary said, “We’ve got to be careful of formulas. They [did] place their hands on them to receive the Holy Spirit, but just wait, when we get to [Acts 10](#), the household of Cornelius received the Holy Spirit and no one laid [their] hands on them. ... Some of my card-carrying charismatic friends, and I believe in all of the gifts of the Spirit too, [with whom I’ve had some disagreements believe] you have to lay hands on people to receive the Holy Spirit. No, you don’t! In [Acts 10](#) the Holy Spirit came upon Cornelius and his whole [household] and no one touched them. [They would say that you have to speak in tongues to show the evidence of the fullness and baptism of the Holy Spirit.] No, you don’t! In [Acts 10](#) they did speak in tongues, but not in [Acts 8](#)! ... Be careful of [putting] God into a little pigeonhole and saying, ‘This is what God always does and this is the way that he does it.’ ... [In] [Acts 2](#) there is no mention of the laying on of hands, but they did speak in tongues.”

d. Simon's Salvation

- i. Pastor Gary said, "This is where it gets a little controversial because some will read [[Acts 8:20-23](#)] and say, 'Simon was never really [saved]. ... Simon wanted [the power that he witnessed in Philip's ministry.] ... Peter who no doubt had the gift of discernment, [as evidenced in the [Acts 5](#) account of Ananias and Sapphira, discerned that Simon] had evil intent. ... [Give the guy a break, he's only been a Believer a few days or at most a week or two!] There's a lot of dumb things new Christians say that they are not aware of yet, but apparently, [in this case] it's more than that because Peter [exposed things for us to better understand what was going on]. ... This is where I tend to lean, that he really was saved, but he was still working out some of the 'old man.' ... The reason I give him the benefit of the doubt is because of what [[Acts 8:13a](#) says, '*Simon himself believed and was baptized.*' ... I would disagree with those who say that Simon [wasn't saved] and that's what Peter 'called out.' I think Simon believed and Peter 'called out' the 'old man.' Look at the humility that [followed in [Acts 8:24](#)], '*Pray to the Lord for me so that nothing you have said may happen to me.*' I see [Simon] as a young, naïve guy who has come out of the life of the occult, and he was still fascinated by the power, but he [needed] to understand the proper use of the power and the proper perspective of the power..."

5. [Acts 8:26-40](#) - *"Now an angel of the Lord said to Philip, 'Go south to the road - the desert road - that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza.' So he started out, and on his way he met an Ethiopian eunuch, an important official in charge of all the treasury of Candace, queen of the Ethiopians. This man had gone to Jerusalem to worship, and on his way home was sitting in his chariot reading the book of Isaiah the prophet. The Spirit told Philip, 'Go to that chariot and stay near it.' Then Philip ran up to the chariot and heard the man reading Isaiah the prophet. 'Do you understand what you are reading?' Philip asked.' 'How can I,' he said, 'unless someone explains it to me?' So he invited Philip to come up and sit with him. The eunuch was reading this passage of Scripture: 'He was led like a sheep to the slaughter, and as a lamb before the shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth. In his humiliation he was deprived of justice. Who can speak of his descendants? For his life was taken from the earth.'" The eunuch asked Philip, 'Tell me, please, who is the prophet talking about, himself or someone else?' Then Philip began with that very passage of Scripture and told him the good news about Jesus. As they traveled along the road, they came to some water and the eunuch said, 'Look, here is water. Why shouldn't I be baptized?' Philip said, 'If you believe with all your heart, you may.' The eunuch answered, 'I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.' And he gave orders to stop the chariot. Then both Philip and the eunuch went down*

into the water and Philip baptized him. When they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord suddenly took Philip away, and the eunuch did not see him again, but went on his way rejoicing. Phillip, however, appeared at Azotus and traveled about, preaching the gospel in all the towns until he reached Caesarea.”

- a. [Acts 8:32–33](#) is a quote from [Isaiah 53:7–8](#).



- b. The Ethiopian Official

- i. It was typical for anyone who served in the queen’s palace to be made a eunuch so there would be no possibility of mixing seed with royal blood.
- ii. The fact that he had a scroll indicates that he himself was very wealthy, or he came with a lot of money from Queen Candace.
 1. Scrolls would have been found in the Temple and in any synagogue.
- iii. God called Philip to bring the gospel to this man.
 1. Pastor Gary said, “Sometimes the Holy Spirit doesn’t give us the whole picture at once. The Holy Spirit will just bear witness in our hearts about a little part of the picture. [In this case, Philip was just instructed to go to Gaza by way of the road along the Mediterranean Sea. ... If you look back on your life, if God had told you everything that was going to happen would you have been able to handle it?”
- iv. The NKJV includes [Acts 8:37](#), but the 1984 NIV adds this verse as a footnote.
 1. The reason for the difference is that there is a long-standing dispute concerning various ancient manuscripts, some of which have this verse included and some that do not include the verse.
 2. Pastor Gary said, “I think [this verse] should be included [in the Bible], and for good reason, because it is in many of the ancient manuscripts...”
 3. [Acts 8:37](#) – “Philip said, ‘If you believe with all your heart, you may.’ The eunuch answered, ‘I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.’ ”

4. Pastor Gary said, “Does [adding this verse] really change anything [about] the story? ... [If the inference is that he wanted to be water baptized, then he would have been a believer.] ... Either way, we see that he was a believer because he asked to be water baptized.”
- v. When we read verses in the Bible like [Acts 8:38](#), we see that water baptism is done by immersion.
 1. [Acts 8:38](#) - “*Then both Philip and the eunuch went **down into the water and Philip baptized him.***” (Emphasis added)
 2. The Greek word for baptize is baptizo, which means to immerse or submerge.²
 3. When a person goes under the water, they are identifying with the death and burial of Jesus.
 4. When a person comes up out of the water, they are identifying with the resurrection of Jesus.
 5. Baptism is not a requirement for salvation because we don’t need to add anything to salvation by faith in the finished work of Jesus Christ.
- vi. There is a large contingency of Ethiopian Jews living in Ethiopia today that some believe are the direct result of this man going back to his people as a witness for Christ.
- c. Philip was immediately taken away by the Holy Spirit, arriving at Azotus, which is the Greek name for Ashdod, the ancient Philistine city in the Gaza area!

* Unless noted, all Scriptures quoted are from the 1984 New International Version (NIV)

² <https://www.blueletterbible.org/lang/lexicon/lexicon.cfm?strongs=G907>